DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 319 648 SO 020 808

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TITLE	The Daily Lives of Women with Young Children: Redefining a "Woman's Place"?
PUB DATE	88
NOTE	20p.; Published under a different title in: E. L. Jackson, Ed., Current Research by Western Canadian Geographers: The Simon Fraser University Papers, 1987. Vancouver, British Columbia, Tantalus Research, 1988.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; Child Rearing; Day Care; *Employed Parents; Foreign Countries; Mother Attitudes; *Mothers; *Parent Role; Physical Environment; *Social Science Research
IDENTIFIERS	Canada

ABSTRACT

The investigation of women's concerns and their position in society has attracted considerable attention throughout the social sciences since the mid-1970s. Particular interest has been shown in the social consequences of a wage labor force that has an increasing proportion of women workers. As women have entered the labor force in increasing numbers, changes have also occurred in household organization and family form. Research has begun to document women's changing activities, but there is little research on the spatial dimensions of women's lives as they experience this social change. This paper is based on research about the experiences of everyday life of women with young children who live in a rapidly growing suburban area of Greater Vancouver, British Columbia. The research investigates how the everyday routines of women are structured by notions of family life and motherhood which, in turn, are embedded in the localized effects of social, economic, and political relations that extend over time and space. It poses the question: in what way is space implicated in the ways in which women interpret and cope with the demands of their mothering role in this particular locality? One of the resources important to women in meeting these demands is "safe space" for childrearing. The paper presents preliminary findings of the study, which indicate the processes involved in the definition, creation, and use of such space, and its significance in the social and spatial structuring of the women's lives. (Author/JB)

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THE DAILY LIVES OF WOMEN WITH YOUNG CHILDREN: REDEFINING A WOMAN'S PLACE?

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THE DAILY LIVES OF WOMEN WITH YOUNG CHILDREN: REDEFINING A 'WOMAN'S PLACE'?

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The investigation of women's concerns and their position in society has attracted considerable attention throughout the social sciences, including geography, since the mid-1970s. Particular interest has been shown in the social consequences of a wage labour force which has an increasing proportion of women workers. As women have entered the labour force in increasing numbers, changes have also occurred in household organization and family form. Many of these "new" workers are also mothers of young children, and today's typical Canadian family can no longer be described as consisting of a male breadwinner with a wife at home looking after the children (Cooke, 1986).

The facts and figures of these changes have provided an impetus for a surge of research interest in women, which has begun to document their changing activities, especially in the case of mothers engaged in waged work. Yet there is little research on the spatial dimensions of women's lives as they experience this social change, whether they are women who are actively involved in the labour force, or those who carry out their lives primarily outside this type of work context. We know even less about what mothering means to them or how ideas about motherhood are translated into everyday life.

This paper is based on research about the experiences of everyday life of women with young children who live in a rapidly growing suburban area of Greater Vancouver, namely the Coquitlam School District. The research investigates how the everyday routines of women are structured by notions of family life and motherhood which, in turn, are embedded in the localized effects of social, economic, and political relations which extend over time and space. It poses the question: in what way *is* space implicated in the ways in which women interpret and cope with the demands of their mothering role in this particular locality? One of the resources important to women in meeting these demands is "safe space" for childrearing. The paper presents preliminary findings of the study, which indicate the processes involved in the definition, creation, and use of such space, and its significance in the social and spatial structuring of the women's lives.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The accumulated effects of economic and social change, which have

occurred over the last few decades, present a quite different context for mothering to women today from that encountered by their grandmothers, or even mothers. One aspect of these different conditions is changes in family structure. Statistics show a steady increase of both dual earner families and single-parent families; by 1984, over fifty per cent of Canadian women with children were working outside the home, even when their children were very young (Cooke, 1986). The increased participation of women in the labour force not only questions the validity of traditional views about mothers' activities, but also poses a paradox for many women who are faced with a social contradiction in beliefs. These beliefs simultaneously emphasize the importance of women caring for their young children at home, yet ascribe social status through success in the non-domestic world of work (Anyon, 1983). Indeed, although women remain largely a marginal and "vulnerable workforce", often engaging in low-skilled and low-paid labour, it is through participation in this productive sphere of activity that many women derive interest and feelings of worth, apart from economic benefits (Cairncross, 1986).

At the same time Dally (1982) asserts that the importance of mothers is emphasized by "experts"; she explains that motherhood is a concept implying a relationship between mother and child which has had different meanings at different times. Today motherhood is idealized, yet mothers tend to be blamed when things go wrong with their children, which often happens in our increasingly complex society. Parker (1981) uses the analytical distinction between "tending" and "caring about" to describe the components of the caring relationship of contemporary motherhood. Following from this, childcare can be seen as consisting of both "tending", that is actually carrying out the tasks required, and "caring about", which refers to a concern for a child's material and social wellbeing.

Despite the increasing number of mothers who have joined the wage labour force, such notions of motherhood contribute to the persistence of a cultural norm that places the primary responsibility of children's care with women. Indeed, empirical studies demonstrate that women remain prime managers of their homes and carry out most household tasks, including childcare, even when combining this with work in paid employment (Borman, 1984). Women, in general, are given little support for their mothering occupation in the form of formal institutions; Dally comments (1982, p. 9), "the majority of women have had, increasingly, to bring up their children alone" during the twentieth century. The social segregation that is entailed is compounded by the spatial segregation of domestic work within the single family dwelling (McDowell, 1983), while in addition, domestic activity does not enjoy

high prestige (Hirschon, 1985).

The practical dilemmas related to these developments can result in considerable stress for women, whether adhering to the cultural norm of the two-parent family with wife at home or not. The particular difficulties of the female single parent as the sole breadwinner of her household is one instance (Klodawsky, Spector, and Rose, 1985). At the other end of the spectrum the plight of the housebound mother, socially and physically isolated and subject to depression, is recognized (Dally, 1982; Doyal and Elston, 1986). The majority of mothers fall between the extremes of these cases. Most young children still live in two-parent families, but about fifty per cent have mothers working outside the home.

My own study is concerned with how women attempt to modify the problem of the social contradiction outlined above. In phrasing the empirical problem around the women's coping strategies, I also address a theoretical problem concerned with the relationship between space and the constitution of motherhood. I have been especially interested in how the social meanings of motherhood are constructed and understood in a particular locality and become embodied in the structuring of women's spatial and temporal domains.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The space most commonly recognized as pertaining specifically to women's activities is that of the home and neighbourhood, especially in the particular built form of the suburb. Ley's (1983) useful summary of suburban studies suggests a localism of everyday life, based on understanding of "the home as a place of child-raising"; residents' energies are focused on notions of "happy domesticity" (Ley, 1983, p. 343). Yet child-rearing has received limited attention in this geographical literature despite its central concern to women as suburban dwellers.

A recent feminist perspective has added another window through which to view the world of home and neighbourhood, which has been of enormous value in drawing out some of the connections between women's position in society and the social organization of space. The predominant theme of this literature is a focus on the challenge to women of combining productive and reproductive work within current spatial and temporal arrangements of the built environment, which characteristically separates neighbourhoods of single-family dwellings from employment opportunities and services (Holcomb, 1984; Wekerle, 1980).

Time-geography and activity pattern approaches have directed

attention to the particular time and space constraints which women with children face as they juggle their employment and home lives within the schedules and locations of workplace, transportation facilities, childcare, and other institutional services. The notion of "gender role constraint" emerges as a central concept in explaining the influence of the coincidence of physical and social constraints on the differential participation of men and women in both domestic and wage labour spheres of activity (Hanson and Hanson, 1981; Palm and Pred, 1978; Pickup, 1984; Tivers, 1985). Gender refers to socially constructed understandings of masculinity and femininity, rather than differences based on biological sex. "Gender role" is commonly used in accordance with Kessler and McKenna's (1982) definition as "a set of expectations about what behaviours are appropriate for people of one gender." Tivers's work illustrates the restricted activity patterns of mothers with pre-schoolers in relation to the primacy of their mothering responsibilities, and is particularly important in stressing that such expectations concerning roles are socially defined within a particular structure of social relations.

Research from a radical stance has emphasized that the form of the built environment also is a social construction, which has embodied cultural values about men and women's work that reaffirm and sharpen the structure of gender relations and the associated expectations of what activities are done by which gender, when, and where (Mackenzie and Rose, 1983). The taken-for-granted separation between home and wage workplace has been demonstrated as arising from the restructuring of the economy during the Industrial Revolution, which was accompanied by a middle-class ideal of women's domesticity designating the home as a woman's appropriate domain (Brownill, 1984; Hayford, 1974). Yet both historical and contemporary material suggests that there is considerable variability in gender roles, including both regional and class differences, which although emanating from the effects of general economic conditions, are also forged in contexts of particular spatial distributions of labour and housing markets (Mackenzie and Rose, 1983; McDowell and Massey, 1984).

Early geographical literature on women, both from behavioural and radical stances, has tended to treat women as essentially passive, responding as individuals to the structure of society. Yet the emphasis on constraint within these models has omitted consideration of active attempts by mothers to gain access to the resources of the environment, and only a few studies have indicated the importance of the use of links with other people in modifying time-space constraints (Genovese, 1980; Miller, 1982). Tietjin's (1985) study of Swedish mothers, for example, indicates that children are a "constraint" for women but also may be

avenues for the activation of informal support systems, opening up new options for women's activities. She comments that there has been no research on such questions as yet. However, studies are emerging which show women as active human agents, who redefine uses of homes and neighbourhoods in a manner supportive of their lives (Dyck, 1984; Mackenzie, 1986b).

Thus we cannot regard expectations concerning gender or its manifestations to be in any way immutable. How gender is viewed and how it operates become problematic and are matters for empirical investigation in particular locales.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The study has been guided by the increasing incorporation of social theory into the conceptualization of the relationship between social relations and spatial structure, which suggests that the understanding of social life, and the routines of everyday life of which it is constituted, must be placed in the context of particular localities (Gregory and Urry, 1985). In particular it has been formed by work incorporating socialist-feminist theory, which is ultimately concerned with incorporating gender into "mainstream" geographical thought, and by a critical human geography influenced by notions of Giddens's structuration theory (1976, 1979, 1981), which views society and space as neither existing independently of human activity, nor being a product of it. Both these theoretical orientations suggest that, just as women's position in society has been recognized as being embedded in a particular structure of social relations, it is equally important to recognize that these social relations themselves do not exist on the head of a pin, as Massey (1985) puts it, but take place over time and space. In attempting to consider questions of agency and structure within one framework, such perspectives also link with the humanistic quest of connecting the problems of human everyday experience with the wider structuring of geographical context.

Rather than advocating specific research methodologies, structuration theory provides, according to Giddens, sensitizing concepts about how we think about our social and spatial worlds. Notions of structuration stress the transformative capacity of human agents as they carry out their lives in a matrix of locales, or settings for encounters, which compose the physical and social environment. From this perspective, the everyday activities that have been described as the manifestations of gender role expectations become part and parcel of both the reproduction and transformation of social life.

Feminist geography has been valuable in demonstrating gender as an important space structuring element, along with other more commonly

recognized variables such as class and ethnicity (Women and Geography Study Group of the IBG, 1984). The main proposition of this approach is that women's social position derives from an inequality in gender relations, which is structured in a sexual division in both the home and wage workplace, and is legitimized through social definitions of the nature of men's and women's roles. Principal among these is that of the mother role, defined by Boulton (1983) as "a socially defined set of guidelines on how to fill an often deeply felt responsibility for dependent children."

Such a gender-sensitive perspective has recognized that the "new" activities which have accompanied women's changing roles, both in and outside the home, are not readily categorized within previous frameworks of understanding the environment; a call is made for methods of inquiry which are able to break down routine assumptions about gender roles. The aim is not only to create understandings of links between social and spatial worlds, but also to correct fundamental biases in theoretical approaches which relegate women and their activities to a "separate" sphere of study and understanding. Initially, however, studies specifically on women are needed in order to ground substantive concepts firmly in women's own experiences and the meanings they employ in the interpretation of their actions. The researcher aims to gain an "insider" perspective (McDowell, 1983; Mackenzie, 1984). What becomes important, according to Mackenzie (1986a), are "the 'mundane' and 'commonsense' details of maintaining life in capitalist society, those small human actions that make up and change our lives and our analytical categories."

The theoretical assumptions underlying my own research are derived from the foregoing theoretical perspectives. One is the understanding of the environment as the spatial distribution of resources, access to which is mediated by normative rules and a complexity of factors including gender relations. Resources refer not only to the physical attributes and people present in a locale, but also to stocks of knowledge, including rules, which influence action. Second is the notion of women as skilled, knowledgeable human agents who act within a structure of social relations premised on a sexual division of labour, both within the home and the wage workplace. The centrality afforded to the routines of everyday life in these approaches also has implications for the methods used in data collection.

METHODS

The choice of research methods was directed towards gathering data which would place women's daily routines and their interpretations of

their mothering role in context. A case study approach was used, which aimed to produce both theoretical understanding and description of the material under consideration. This approach is not concerned with verification or hypothesis testing, but rather the identification and conceptualization of substantive relations through logical inference. Ethnographic studies of this type are historically and locally specific, but analysis aims to communicate insights through concepts able to transcend ethnographic particularities (Mitchell, 1983). Although each study is in some way unique, underlying principles of organization may be identified which are common to all. The actual form of organization, however, may differ according to local political, economic, and cultural conditions. This approach allows the production of accounts of considerable detail, derived from the subjects' own views and experiences in context of the whole of their lives, which in turn are embedded in a particular social and material environment.

The organization of data collection focused on the need for information on what childrearing specifically consisted of, in terms of the tasks involved, where they took place, and who did them, and how they were organized within a particular family's lifestyle. A period of participant observation provided insights into the broad patterning of activities, and these then acted as the basis from which decisions were made on the choice of further research techniques and the types of questions on which to focus. Detailed information was collected from specific respondents obtained by snowballing from an initial group contacted through a community women's seminar series. A time-space diary and questionnaire were used to gain details of daily and weekly routines, while the major part of data collection took the form of in-depth, ethnographic interviewing to imbue these actions with meaning and form the basis of categorization.

There are many forms of interview and techniques of interviewing, and my own choice was guided by recent thinking on the value of "interactive" interviewing for gaining "insider" accounts (Sayer and Morgan, 1984). This type of interviewing contrasts with the commonly used form of interview in which the interviewer attempts to take a neutral, detached role and uses pre-set questions with an aim of standardizing the interview process. Instead the interviewer is recognized as being involved in the research process, which is not only inevitable but in fact desirable if the researcher is to be admitted into the personal, sensitive details of a person's life. Acknowledging commonalities of situation or interests allows sharing of understandings and opens up more valid flows of information (Oakley, 1981).

A written interview schedule guided the questions asked, but their sequencing varied according to the particular flows of information

emerging from differences in the women's situations. In addition to the respondents providing considerable detail about their day to day activities, they were able to reveal a hierarchy of concerns which influenced the actions taken in dealing with the dilemma of being both mother and potential, or actual, wage worker. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

ANALYSIS

Analysis is in progress and consists of a "constant comparative method", described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), in which the ethnographic data from the interviews is compared between the individual cases and themes and ethnographic categories are drawn out. These will then be used to develop analytic concepts to explain the substantive relations discovered.

"Motherhood", encapsulated in the term the "good mother", clearly emerged as a primary facet of identity among the women, but how this was interpreted and translated into action belied the more generalized notion of "gender role constraint" identified in the literature. Indeed, the frequently taken-for-granted lives of women are of considerable complexity and intimately related to the environment in which they take place. At this point a brief summary of one case is presented to show the consequences of action taken in relation to a particular sequencing of events and the type of resources available. That such "private" solutions have wider implications for the structuring of space will then be shown.

The choice of "Barbara" for this case is arbitrary, for although the outcome of each woman's life is unique, the circumstances surrounding their actions, and the resources available to them in specific locales, are embedded in linked aspects of home, community, and wage workplace. The housing, social, and employment conditions of women in the Coquitlam area are an integral part of the spatial aspects of a wider organization of economic and social relations, which emerge in a particular geographical patterning in the Greater Vancouver area.

The Coquitlam School District is composed of three municipalities, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody, which form a rapidly growing sub-region of the Greater Vancouver area. Distinct municipalities in the late 1800s, they now have a combined population of 113,400, the majority of whom live in detached, single-family dwellings, and form part of an outer ring of suburbs (Statistics Canada, 1986 (Interim counts)). A particular impetus to the area's growth was the Greater Vancouver Regional District's Livable Region Plan, which

occasioned the building of the Coquitlam Centre Mall in 1979 as the first phase in the creation of a new regional town centre. Since then, commercial and residential development has burgeoned, while new industrial areas have been developed to add light secondary industry, wholesaling and warehousing to the early local economies based on sawmill operations, gravel and sand extraction, the C.P.R maintenance and marshalling yards, small-scale agriculture, and the oil refineries and port facilities of Port Moody.

Although the decentralization of population growth and jobs aimed for in the Livable Region Plan has to some extent been achieved, the spatial distribution of labour markets has retained a pattern common to advanced capitalist society, characterized by a clustering of quaternary industry in metropolitan centres and a dispersal of primary and secondary industry to the suburbs or the periphery of cities (Ley, 1983). Thus, despite its rapid commercial growth, the Coquitlam area has not shared in the office boom of the 1970s, and the majority of senior professional, technical, and administrative jobs remain in Vancouver. The rapid growth of white collar jobs during the 1970s has been an important part of women's participation in the labour force and, common to a sex-differentiated labour market, the majority of women's employment has been in clerical and health occupations, with some evidence of women moving into more senior occupations (Ley and Mills, 1986). Employment patterns for Coquitlam and Port Moody reflect regional averages, although local hospitals and a growing medical centre continue Port Coquitlam's long-held trend of a higher percentage of women employed in health occupations.

Barbara is in her early thirties and lives in one of the few large subdivisions cut into forest in the late 1960s in the Coquitlam area. Her life-style within this neighbourhood is considerably different from before she and her husband had children. As with much of the Greater Vancouver Regional District's population, both she and her husband are migrants, arriving in one of the economic growth booms of 1978 to 1981 and reflecting conditions in their own province (GVRD, 1982). Barbara described the course of events that resulted in them living in Port Coquitlam. She and her husband left Quebec in 1979 to come to British Columbia when they found they were having difficulty with the increased use of French, both verbally and in documents in their jobs. A precipitating factor was the refusal of her husband's firm to give him a month off for a planned honeymoon trip to Europe. They first went to Calgary, where her husband's mother lives, but didn't like it and moved to the coast a year later, where Barbara already had a brother and two sisters living in the Coquitlam area. They both found work requiring skills similar to their previous jobs in Montreal. Barbara

worked for B.C. Tel, one of the few head offices to locate outside the Central Business District, while her husband continued in sales in a precision manufacturing firm on the southern periphery of Vancouver.

Although they see themselves as "city" people, the structure of house prices precluded thoughts of living in a family-oriented area of Vancouver or inner suburb, and some time before the birth of their first child, they bought their present house, "sort of gravitating here because of family." Whereas family structure, housing, and labour markets intersect for high-earning quaternary workers without children who live in gentrified areas of the inner city (Ley and Mills, 1986), other white collar workers with children, such as Barbara and her husband, are likely to experience a disjuncture between the location of jobs in their occupational categories and housing which they deem appropriate for family life. One problem posed by this this spatial separation of home workplace and wage workplace was met by kin links, for Barbara continued with her job after having the baby, leaving him with her sister during the day.

However, a number of factors combined to change the situation. A family dispute resulted in contacts being dropped, which not only meant a baby-sitting source had gone, but also occasions for sociability. Barbara wanted to keep working, but was concerned about her son, as he was prone to bronchitis and heavy colds, and she needed someone she could trust to care for him. As in the case of other of the women who are faced with finding daycare without the advantage of "word-of-mouth" contacts, she looked around for sources of information. Although the local health unit had a limited list of licensed day care operators, Barbara happened to notice an advertisement in the local paper for unlicensed home daycare. As she said, "I called her up and something clicked," so she visited the home and was very pleased with the situation. It was close by, on a cul de sac; there were other children for her son to play with, and many activities. She felt it was more like a preschool than a daycare: "I hate to use the word babysitter; she was much more than that. I was really lucky". This feeling of good fortune was expressed by other of the women, who, however, had sometimes tried several options before finding what they considered satisfactory care for their children. Their definitions of what constituted "good care" corresponded closely to their norms of family life and childrearing.

However, conditions at work were less conducive to combining home and waged work. Her supervisor at work was quite unsympathetic to the situation of mothers with obligations other than those of the workplace, and made it uncomfortable for Barbara to take a day off if her child was sick or if her babysitter was unable to look after

the child due to health appointments or her own children's sickness. These difficulties culminated when she was pregnant with her second child; shortly before his birth she left her job. Barbara expressed that she had wished to spend some time at home with her children anyway, but she had found the experience isolating.

The subdivision in which she lives is a quiet residential area with little interruption to the detached single-family dwelling pattern. The large living room window looks across to similar houses on the other side of the minor artery road, which is a bus route. On the winter day of the interview, cars and the bus occasionally passed, but otherwise there was no sign of neighbouring residents. There is no corner store within walking distance and the nearest shopping area is about three kilometres away, but the family has two cars and Barbara can reach the small, downtown area of Port Coquitlam or a mass of shopping outlets and consumer services at the Coquitlam Centre in less than fifteen minutes. However, as with other mothers of pre-schoolers that I interviewed, and a situation commonly identified in the literature, she found herself confined to the house to a considerable extent, explaining that her seven-month baby still naps during the day. She drove her eldest son to a pre-school on the other side of the municipality two mornings a week and her days at this time were mainly filled with the practical tasks of looking after the baby, housework, and the errands and shopping trips necessary to provide for the family's everyday needs.

Her days were long as her husband, as with over a quarter of the labour force resident in the Coquitlam area, commutes to his job in Vancouver, the forty-five or fifty minute drive requiring him to leave home early in the morning, not returning until early evening. A gender division of domestic activity was clear within the household. Primary responsibility for the inside of the house was taken by Barbara, although previously when she was working outside the home she and her husband shared more chores. "He used to help out more. On the weekends he would start vacuuming the house and that sort of thing, but now feel I have the time to do it, so I try and do everything." Her husband, however, continued to take the children out with him some evenings or at the weekend and babysat when Barbara took advantage of a recreational evening class in a neighbouring municipality. Otherwise her activities were localized within the "community" with the exception of the occasional trip to Stanley Park or other attraction in Vancouver with her husband and children.

Her social contacts were few, for her immediate neighbours were the original owners of their homes, now with grown up children, and she found little occasion to meet them. She had made one good friend,

however, who had previously babysat her son when she had a full-time clerical job in an inner suburb of Vancouver. She socialized with her in the evening sometimes, but daytime contact was limited, due to her friend's daycare business. She missed people to talk to and exchange ideas with. "That's one thing I find hard. I'd prefer to be on a street where there were younger neighbours, people who I'd have more in common with, especially for my children." Unlike other of the women I interviewed who were living in the newer suburbs of the area, or had children in co-operatively run pre-schools, she had not found her children to be sources of new contacts for herself. In addition her former work colleagues were dispersed through Greater Vancouver, like herself commuting to the spatial clustering of white collar employment.

Not content with her domestic way-of-life, Barbara was beginning to change her situation. Seeking stimulation away from the children, she began to attend a seminar series presented by the local Parks and Recreation Department, which addressed a variety of issues ranging from motherhood, to peace, to religion. These were held on a morning when her oldest son was in preschool and she left her baby with the one neighbour she knew. She found the talks interesting and, more importantly, made some links with other women who were also mainly at home with their children. In addition to beginning to develop friendships, she was opened up to a whole range of information previously unknown to her, altering her relationship to the environment. One resource she came to know about was a baby-sitting co-op in her area, set up by mothers who knew each other and who sponsored new members when spaces arose, thus securing some control over who looked after their children. At the time Barbara was able to join. This allowed her to exchange babysitting with other mothers on a point system. Monthly meetings permitted the sharing of ideas and information, and she found that some mothers were using members of the co-op to look after their children while pursuing part-time work in the local stores, medical offices, and other service employment. For herself, this informal institution freed time for her to investigate AWARE, a federal programme for evaluating and re-training women for jobs outside the home. She had heard about this from one of the seminar sessions she had attended, and had been encouraged to go by the accounts of other women who had attended. In common with the other women, it was through child-centred networks that new resources had been opened up.

Two months later she phoned, as she thought I might be interested in her latest news. She had joined her friend's daycare business and also had started doing volunteer work in order to satisfy the

prerequisites of a local community college's social work course. She was glad to have found a source of employment which allowed some control over her working conditions. She was happy to take her children to the daycare business with her and, in effect, had spatially fused both home and paid workplaces. So we leave Barbara on the threshold of a new stage in her life.

Although the details of Barbara's life differ from those of other respondents, the interview material demonstrated commonalities in their stories that lay in the process of linking with other mothers, often through child-centred networks, in order to create what they feel are "safe" places to leave their children. These take a variety of modes ranging from institutional forms, such as preschools, to the homes of friends, and several women create and sustain a number of options which are used for different purposes. But whether the purpose of use is for regular periods of employment or to improve their home working conditions by freeing time to carry out other tasks, meet health appointments, or provide themselves with leisure time, the notion of being a "good mother" is pervasive in making these choices.

We can view the strategies used by the women studied as attempting to combine the two dimensions of motherhood, identified by Parker (1981), in spatially distinct places. In Barbara's case, the use of a sister, a well-trusted, although unlicensed daycare, a sponsored baby-sitting co-op, and a pre-school she felt happy with, all allowed her to separate spatially the tending aspects of motherhood from the "caring about". Her careful choice of care-setting ensured that her child was appropriately cared for. In this way her children could be tended in other places, but in exercising a degree of control over this through finding women who would look after her children in a similar way to herself, she could thus satisfy the "caring about" component of motherhood and continue to be a "good mother" while away from her children. This spatial separation allowed Barbara to begin expanding her own activities with a view of developing a new career.

DISCUSSION

"I am the centre of the home" was a statement frequently expressed by women both working primarily outside or within the home, and all accepted the primary responsibility of childrearing. Yet an emphasis on constraint in the literature has omitted discussion of the different ways in which "gender roles" are interpreted and lived. Constraint approaches have also failed to recognize the social linkages that are generated during the course of child-rearing, which are valuable in both creating supports for women's mothering occupation and permitting the expansion of both

their social and spatial activity.

The short-term solution for an individual is also important in understanding the consequences of such actions in the longer term. What is of central significance is that the major channels of information and organizational responses are those involving other women, clustered together in a "family-oriented" suburb. Women acting for each other have created institutional forms for the tending aspects of motherhood, which although not always visible on the landscape have a potential for structuring social life in the longer term. They comprise a base from which women can expand their activities in the productive sphere of work or, just as importantly, improve their conditions of work as mothers bringing up children in the isolation of the single family dwelling. In effect they are able to extend the bounds of both the social and spatial domains of motherhood by extending the domestic workplace into neighbourhood space, which, however, is carefully controlled.

The existence of these types of arrangement for supporting an extension of women's activities constitute a form of knowledge, entering a common currency of ideas which are available for women to draw on in their coping strategies. Much of the talk among women is home-oriented and about children, and provides an ongoing context for defining rules and understandings over the use of the environment and how motherhood is appropriately practised. Norms and rules are examined, agreed upon, and changed in a constant process of re-evaluation. Understanding concerning particular space are generated through social activity, and in creating "safe" places for children outside the family home, these women's actions lead to renegotiations over understanding of what are appropriate modes of childcare. This may not consist of the family home with mother present.

Such space that fulfils the criteria of tending and "caring about", however, is a scarce resource, as evidenced by the continued demand for public daycare. The women in my study certainly did not have equal access to what they consider "caring space" for their children, nor were they always able to create it. It was important that they had information and social linkages in order to convert space in their homes or neighbourhoods in this way.

The foregoing has only given a glimpse of the fieldwork, but indicates how intensive methods may raise otherwise ignored, or overlooked, processes. Although particular notions of family life and motherhood were found to be pervasive, how these contributed to specifically defined gender roles depended on a complexity of factors linking home, community, and wage workplace; several styles of living were encountered. One aspect of this interdependency is illustrated in

the occupational shifts of advanced capitalism and a sex-differentiated labour market which have consequences for the availability and location of certain categories of waged work, that further influence the organization of domestic labour, both socially and spatially. At no point did Barbara and her husband consider that he rather than she should stay at home. Hers was clearly the secondary wage. In addition, ideas about family life are important with regard to how and where it should take place, including housing and neighbourhood types.

Although the structuring of economic and social relations extends into the everyday facets of people's lives, their actions are, at the same time, responding to changes. In so doing, they are actively constituting the conditions under which these extended relations are experienced in particular localities. Neither ideas nor conditions are static and it is not the child *per se*, but the organization of social relations and the timing and spacing of everyday life around changing understandings of the "who" and "where" of motherhood, which shape the significance of "gender role" as a constraint and opportunity.

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